



**Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River Fire Station #2
Monday, April 28, 2025**

Members Present: Mayor John Dietz, Councilmember Jennifer Wagner, Councilmember Mike Beyer, Councilmember Cory Grupa, Councilmember J. Brian Calva

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Administrator Cal Portner, Economic Development Director Brent O'Neil, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Fire Chief Mark Dickinson, Police Chief David Kuhnly, Public Works Director/Chief Engineer Justin Femrite, Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Special Services Sergeant Andy Zabee, City Clerk Tina Allard, and Records Specialist Katie Porath

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

2.1 Review and Discuss Mission, Vision, and Goals

Leadership Styles

Mr. Portner reviewed the results of the leadership questionnaire that showed personality traits of directors and council members.

Review Values, Vision, Mission Statement, and Goals

Mr. Portner reviewed the current values, vision, mission statement, and goals.

Councilmember Calva asked about the use of the word "revolutionary" in the Vision Statement. Mr. Portner explained some areas that the city has done things differently than surrounding cities. Councilmember Calva stated he liked the word and felt the city could highlight it more.

Councilmember Beyer stated he liked the word "collaboration".

Councilmember Wagner suggested a few alternatives for the Vision Statement and Mission. The Council will review these at a future work session.

Mr. Portner reviewed the goals set in 2024.

FT Center Branding

Mayor Dietz asked about sponsorship of the Furniture and Things Community Event Center field house and senior center. Mr. Stremcha reviewed how the department is trying to standardize the timeframe and price of dasher boards to achieve consistency. Councilmember Beyer asked that the council be kept to date on the status of contract renewals.

Draft a Cost Participation Policy for Trail and Street Improvement Projects

Mr. Femrite stated that the goal of drafting a Cost Participation Policy for Trail and Street Improvements Projects would depend on some legislative changes.

Commercial Development Hotel/Hospitality Growth

The Council discussed locations for a hotel. Councilmember Wagner was in favor of a hotel in the downtown area as that would increase foot traffic. She asked if a parking ramp could be connected across Highway 10 to Spike's parking lot with a skyway.

Understand Obligations for Capped Landfill

Mayor Dietz asked for the timeline on closure of the landfill and progress with relocating into Livonia. The landfill will be closed by the end of 2030 and as early as 2027.

Oak Knoll/Hale's Field Improvements - Collaboration with ISD #728

Mayor Dietz asked about the collaborative Oak Knoll/Hale's Field project with ISD #728. Will the school district renovate the area without the city if the buildings in the area are not removed? Mr. Portner stated it was too early in the plan to know.

Gravel Mining Closure

Mayor Dietz asked if any of the gravel mines are close to being reclaimed as residential or commercial land. Mr. Carlton responded that a piece along Highway 169 is close and has a buyer. Mr. Femrite added that the water and sewer is not currently sized for the gravel mine area and would need to be upgraded.

Fairground Property

The Council discussed the future of the fairground property. Councilmember Calva stated the fair seems to be declining in attendance.

Downtown Plan

Mr. Carlton reviewed the plan for downtown Elk River. The Council discussed zoning of properties, the loss of addition of parking, potential bathroom locations, returning to restrictions on parking hours, one-way streets, and locations for a parking ramp.

Mayor Dietz stated that the process of eliminating parking spaces while a ramp is built may cause businesses to suffer or go under. He is against losing any parking spaces.

Councilmember Wagner asked about discussing with The Bank of Elk River to use their parking lot after hours and on weekends or to partner with Dare's funeral home to use their parking lot when not needed by their business.

Councilmember Grupa was against putting money into sidewalk upgrades if the downtown configuration will be changing in the future.

Councilmember Beyer asked about past plans for parking in the downtown when parking was lost due to the apartments and other development.

Mr. Carlton stated that 20-foot-wide sidewalks may encourage people to hang around to eat and shop. Mayor Dietz added that it would increase the amount of sidewalk shoveling required by businesses.

Mayor Dietz asked Mr. Femrite if there was any solution for the lanes crossing Highway 10 to go east since the traffic gets backed up in this location. Mr. Femrite stated the city has optimized everything possible to get the space that is there, and any changes would need to be part of a larger vision. Councilmember Wagner suggested not allowing left turns off Parish Avenue between 4 - 6 p.m.

Mayor Dietz asked about increasing the number of businesses along Main Street from the railroad tracks to Highway 169.

Mr. Carlton stated an ambitious goal would be to have Main Street go under Highway 10 and the railroad tracks, but there would be some accessibility issues to overcome.

Councilmember Wagner asked if the downtown parking lot could be restructured similarly to the high school.

The Council recessed at 3:19 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 3:30 p.m.

Growth Goals (residential/industrial/retail)

Mayor Dietz stated the city should be looking for more opportunities for industrial land. Mr. Carlton suggested the sludge land. Mr. O'Neil added that sludge land has limited uses because of the sludge byproduct.

Mr. Carlton stated an opportunity for development could be in parking lots such as Ashley Furniture, Home Depot, or Walmart if the Council revised the ordinance regarding parking requirements.

Mr. O'Neil suggested looking at properties between Main Street and Elk Hills Drive as a long-term business opportunity.

Street Use ATV Discussion

Sergeant Zabee gave an overview of current Elk River regulations and complaints about ATVs and golf carts on city streets. The current snowmobile map may need to be updated as Highway 169 Redefine removed some snowmobile trails.

The Council agreed not to change the restrictions at this time.

Elk River Police Department Attrition Plan

Police Chief Kuhnly reviewed upcoming retirements. New officers take about 11 months to onboard and train. Sometimes officers don't pass the training and the department has to re-start the process. He reviewed a few different plans that might provide enough officers and supervisory staff in the future.

The Council recessed at 4:47 p.m. for dinner. The meeting reconvened at 5:26 p.m.

Bonding/Finance/Fire, Parks, Equipment

Mr. Stremcha reviewed upcoming high-cost projects, including Fire Station #1, fire equipment, and the three phases of the Athletic Framework Plan. The Council reviewed bonding, local area sales tax, or

increasing franchise fees. The Council agreed that, if a sales tax referendum should be added to the 2026 ballot, it should only include the fire station and not park improvements. Councilmember Wagner felt that park improvements should wait until the *Active Elk River* was paid off.

Councilmember Wagner added that maintenance of parks and the Furniture and Things Community Event Center will fall on the tax rolls after the referendum is paid off and needs to be budgeted.

Mayor Dietz asked about an increase in youth sports participation. Mr. Stremcha stated another analysis could be run. Mr. Stremcha added that converting some fields to turf would increase the number of practices and games that could be played on them without ruining the grass.

City Gravel Roads

Mr. Femrite reviewed the possibility of paving gravel roads and parking lots. The Council agreed that it was not a priority.

Goal Setting

Mr. Portner asked if Council had any additional goals to add and finalized the list.

Short-term (2025-26)

- Commercial Development
- Budget and sinking fund for building repair
 - Transition Public Works Facility bond to general levy
- Draft a Cost Participation Policy for Trail and Street Improvement Projects
- Fire Station #1 Construction
- Cannabound fully staffed and operational
- Northbound Liquor Construction

Mid-Term (2030)

- Acquire business park land
 - Assist developers with private acquisition as needed
- Commercial development
 - Commercial Reserve Transition Zoning District
 - Hotel/Hospitality Growth
- Oak Knoll/Hale's Field improvement - collaboration with ISD #728
- Parks and Rec app - directions, ads, amenities, park features
- Communitywide Strategic Planning Implementation (downtown district)
- Implementation of Athletic Field Framework Plan
- Implementation of new Housing Study recommendations (workforce housing)
- Electronic Billboards Planning and Development
- Implement Police Attrition Plan

Long-term (2035)

- Urban Service Area Expansion

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- Commercial/Industrial development
 - Trail connections
 - Pedestrian Trail Connection downtown over the railroad and Trunk Highway 10
 - More retail development in western Elk River
 - Riverwalk from Orono Park to City of Ramsey
 - Highway 10 safety and mobility improvements, 165th to Jarvis Street
 - Trunk Highway 169 and 225th Avenue Safety Improvements
 - Implementation of Downtown Small Area Study recommendations
 - County Fairgrounds Development
 - Commercial Reserve Transition Zoning review/update
 - Implement Athletic Field Framework Plan
 - Gravel Road Paving Plan
 - Wapiti Campground

Mr. Portner will bring the goals back on a future agenda for review and acceptance.

Wrap Up/Adjournment

Councilmember Beyer thanked staff for their budget preparation the previous year.

3. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to adjourn the meeting of City Council. Motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Katie Porath.



John J. Dietz, Mayor



Tina Allard, City Clerk